



for a sustainable future

Population Matters

135-137 Station Road, London E4 6AG
Tel: 020 8123 9116 www.populationmatters.org

Sir Michael Dixon
Director, The Natural History Museum
Cromwell Road
London SW7 5BD

20 June 2017

Dear Sir Michael,

We are writing to you as a group of concerned zoologists, natural historians and conservationists – who are also variously patrons, trustees or staff members of Population Matters, which advocates that both the factors of human population and consumption patterns need to be taken into account when considering the sustainable future of our planet.

We are writing specifically to ask that the Natural History Museum, given its international scientific reputation, influence, and outreach to more than four-and-a-half million people from around the world annually, takes the lead in presenting the facts about the impacts of our species upon the Earth, its biodiversity and ecosystems more openly and clearly.

In particular, the Museum is in a unique position to set out and make accessible the concept of ‘The Anthropocene’ - the epoch proposed by a growing body of scientists from across the disciplines of biology, geology and climatology to more accurately reflect the evidence of the significant human impact upon the Earth’s biodiversity, climate and other ecosystems. The consensus amongst those promoting the adoption of the Anthropocene is that its start date would be the Industrial Revolution (c. 1750/1800) - although some argue for an earlier start date of when humans first undertook settled agriculture.

We are sure you will be familiar with the evidence supporting our call for the Natural History Museum to show leadership in communicating the facts of human impacts upon our planet and the threat those present to the wellbeing and survival of future generations of humans – as well as to the myriad, wonderful other species with which we share this planet. Nevertheless, we have provided some key sources below in support of our case and request.

As cited in that summary, there is no shortage of reputable, scientific evidence underpinning the concept of ‘The Anthropocene Epoch’, the facts of ‘The 6th Great Extinction’, or the factors driving those negative impacts upon biodiversity and sustainability. What is lacking is clear, accessible information presenting the facts, communicating the urgency of the issue, and enabling people to make positive choices to mitigate the impacts. The Natural History Museum is admirably placed, with the heritage and necessary skills, to meet



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that need – one which would complement the Museum’s existing exhibitions and be consistent with your stated mission and purpose,
“to challenge the way people think about the natural world – its past, present and future. We aim to stimulate public debate about humanity’s future and equip our audiences at every level with an understanding of science.”

We look forward to discussing this pressing matter, but exciting opportunity, with you further. We may be contacted care of the Population Matters address above, or via robin.maynard@populationmatters.org. Thank you for your consideration of this letter.

Yours sincerely

Professor Aubrey Manning OBE, FRSE, FRSB

Chris Packham, Presenter BBC *Springwatch*, Natural Historian

Robin Maynard, Director Population Matters

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